

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-05 EUR-12 INR-07 IO-14
PA-02 PRS-01 SCA-01 SCS-05 EB-07 SSO-00 CCO-00
NSC-05 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /075 W
-----141006Z 060486 /14

O 140920Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3339

UNCLAS MUSCAT 0918

DEPARTMENT PASS AID/OFDA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SWEL, MU
SUBJECT: INITIAL REPORT OF CYCLONE DAMAGE

REF: OTTO-MASON TELECON JUNE 13

1. WE APPRECIATE REFERENCED TELECON ALERTING US TO
APPROACH OF CYCLONE. OMANGOV OFFICIALS HAD ALSO SEEN STORM
COMING AND HAD PUT WORD OUT ON RADIO.

2. CYCLONE HIT SOUTHERN COAST OF OMAN MORNING JUNE 13.
WINDS REPORTED AT ONE POINT TO BE ABOUT 75 MPH ("FORCE 12")
WERE ACCOMPANIED BY HEAVY RAIN AND HIGH SEAS. CENTER
STRUCK NEAR MASIRAH ISLAND EARLY THAT MORNING AND PROCEEDED
GENERALLY WESTWARD TO MAINLAND. STORM THEN PASSED OVER
SPARSELY POPULATED AREA OF MAINLAND LOSING FORCE AS IT WENT.
AT MIDDAY TODAY, JUNE 14, STORM WAS AT LATITUDE 21 NORTH,
LONGITUDE 56 EAST. IT IS CONSIDERED NO LONGER CYCLONIC.

3. AS FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE AT THIS POINT, DAMAGE IN
OMAN WAS NOT DISASTROUS, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF MASIRAH.
THE SEAPORT TOWN OF SUR, JUST NORTH OF STORM'S CENTER,
SUFFERED HIGH SEAS AND SWELLS THAT CAUSED SOME COASTAL DAMAGE.
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THERE IS A REPORT THAT DAMAGE ALSO OCCURRED AT FRENCH ROAD
CONSTRUCTION SITE NEAR SUR. WE BELIEVE THAT PEACE CORPS VOLUN-
TEERS AT SUR ARE SAFE, BUT PEACE CORPS OFFICE HERE IS CHECKING
ON THEIR WELFARE TODAY. OTHER PARTS OF COUNTRY THROUGH WHICH
STORM PASSED WERE MOSTLY DESERT AREAS. ALTHOUGH REPORTS OF
DAMAGE AND CASUALTIES IN INTERIOR VILLAGES FROM FLASH FLOODING
WILL PROBABLY FILTER IN LATER, AT PRESENT WE THINK PROBLEMS

THERE WERE NOT BEYOND LOCAL ABILITY TO COPE IN USUAL FASHION. ONE LONGER-TERM EFFECT MAY BE DAMAGE TO DATE CROP FROM UNSEASONAL RAIN, BUT THIS IS NOT ASSESSABLE YET.

4. AS FOR MUSCAT, ON STORM'S FRINGE, HIGH SEAS WERE THE MAIN PROBLEM. SOME DAMAGE FROM WAVES HAS BEEN NOTED ALONG COASTAL SECTORS OF CAPITAL AREA, NOTABLY AT SIHAB WHERE POLICE PORT IS BEING BUILT. PART OF THAT CONSTRUCTION WAS WASHED AWAY. HOWEVER, MAIN REACTION OF CAPITAL'S INHABITANTS WAS RELIEF THAT INCREASINGLY HOT SUMMER DAYS (TEMPERATURES GOING OVER 120 DEGREES F) WERE SUDDENLY BROKEN BY "COOL" SPELL HOVERING BELOW 100 DEGREES. RAIN SQUALLS AND WINDS IN CAPITAL YESTERDAY WERE NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM.

5. THUS, MASIRAH IS SOLE FOCUS OF REPORTS OF MAJOR DAMAGE IN THE COUNTRY. BARASTI HUTS (MADE FROM PALM LEAVES) OF MANY OF ISLAND'S INHABITANTS THERE WERE DESTROYED, LEAVING ABOUT 600 PEOPLE HOMELESS. (THIS FIGURE MAY GO UP AS SUPPLEMENTARY REPORTS COME IN.) VICTIMS ARE BEING HOUSED IN ISLAND'S POLICE STATION AND HOSPITAL. THERE IS UNCONFIRMED REPORT OF TWO ISLANDERS KILLED AND TWO SERIOUSLY INJURED. IN ADDITION, BBC RELAY ANTENNAS ON ISLAND WERE BLOWN DOWN, FORCING STATION OFF THE AIR. WE HAVE NO FIRM REPORTS OF PROBLEMS AT THE TRAINING BASE OF SULTANATE OF OMAN AIR FORCE (SOAF), BUT AN UNCONFIRMED STORY HAS IT THAT A HANGAR WAS DAMAGED. THERE ARE TWO AMERICANS ON MASIRAH, AT MUNICIPAL ELECTRICITY/DESALTING STATION, AND WE HAVE WORD THAT THEY ARE SAFE. NO PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS ARE THERE.

6. WE ARE TRYING TO MAKE CONTACT WITH SOAF COMMANDER FOR FURTHER UNCLASSIFIED

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ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGE TO MASIRAH, OF WHICH HE WOULD PROBABLY BE BEST JUDGE. WE WILL ALSO SOUND HIM OUT ON WHETHER SITUATION REQUIRES HELP FROM OUTSIDE, AND SPECIFICALLY WHETHER HE THINKS USG COULD BE OF SERVICE. WE HEAR THAT SOAF IS SENDING SUPPLIES AND AN ENGINEERING TEAM TO THE ISLAND, AND A MINISTRY OF DEFENSE SOURCE TELLS US THAT THE SITUATION IS IN HAND. OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT, THEREFORE, IS THAT OUTSIDE HELP IS NOT NEEDED AND WILL NOT BE REQUESTED.

7. ABOVE IS EXCLUSIVE OF SHIP SINKING AT LATITUDE 20 NORTH, LONGITUDE 63 EAST. SHIP WAS "BUKOM ISLAND" BELIEVED OF SINGAPORE REGISTRY. FIFTEEN SURVIVORS HAVE BEEN PICKED UP, WITH ONE LIFE-BOAT CONTAINING 23 PEOPLE STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR. SHIPS ARE SEARCHING IN AREA AND SOAF IS HELPING.
SIZER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STORMS, DISASTER REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 14-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MUSCAT00918
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770211-0902
Format: TEL
From: MUSCAT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770659/aaaabzuu.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 52ca417d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2159031
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INITIAL REPORT OF CYCLONE DAMAGE
TAGS: SWEL, MU
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/52ca417d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009